

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8421

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

USUN NEW YORK 546

PANCANAL

USCINCSO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PANAMA 4863

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PORG, UNESCO, PN

SUBJECT: UNESCO INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ON COMMUNICATION
POLICIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

REF: STATE 153675

1. PANAMA WILL BE REPRESENTED AT SUBJECT CONFERENCE BY FOLLOWING DELEGATION: LICDO.FABIAN VELARDE, INFORMATION ADVISER, OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT, HEAD OF DELEGATION; GRIZELDA LOPEZ, DIRECTOR OF UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA EDUCATIONAL TV CHANNEL AND NEWSPAPER COLUMNIST; AND PROF. AYALA OF UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA, WHO WORKS PART-TIME AT MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE IN COMMUNICATIONS FIELD.

2. EMBOFF DISCUSSED CONFERENCE WITH VELARDE ON JULY 9, DRAWING ON BACKGROUND PROVIDED REFTEL AND STRESSING USG CONCERNS AT TREND TOWARD GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF MEDIA. VELARDE WAS IN GENERAL AGREEMENT WITH OUR VIEWS ON THIS SCORE. GOVERNMENTS, HE SAID, MUST HAVE A RIGHT TO BE HEARD, TO GET THEIR UNDOSTORTED VIEW BEFORE THEIR OWN

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PEOPLE AND THOSE OF THE REST OF THE WORLD. HOWEVER,

THIS SHOULD NOT BE ACCOMPLISHED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO LEAD TO ACTUAL GOVERNMENT CONTROL OVER OR OPERATION OF MASS MEDIA. WHILE VELARDE CONSIDERED THAT EFFECTIVE DOMINATION OF COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES SUCH AS PANAMA BY OUTPUT FROM ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES WAS SOMETHING WHICH SHOULD BE AVOIDED, HE SAID HE DID NOT CONSIDER THAT WAY TO DO THIS WAS BY GOVERNMENTAL RESTRICTIONS ON OR EXCESSIVE REGULATION OF MEDIA.

3. VELARDE SAID WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT HE COULD NOT APPEAR TO BE TOO OPENLY IN CAHOOTS WITH US REPRESENTATIVES AT CONFERENCE, NO TO TOO OPENLY ESPOUSE AN AVOWEDLY PRO-US POSITION. NEVERTHELESS, HE INDICATED HE WOULD BE EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET AND EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH MESSRS. FISHER AND BELL, AND EXPECT WHAT HE WOULD SAY IN SPEAKING FOR PANAMA AT CONFERENCE WOULD BE FAR FROM DISPLEASING TO US.

4.COMMENT: VELARDE WAS NOT OVERLY FAMILIAR WITH SUBSTANCE OF CONFERENCE; AS LATE AS A WEEK AGO, IN RESPONSE TO A QUERY BY EMBOFF, HE WAS ONLY VAGUELY AWARE THAT IT WAS BEING HELD AND DID NOT KNOW WHO WOULD BE NAMED TO ATTEND FOR PANAMA. VELARDE IS A KEY MAN IN GOP CAMPAIGN TO GET ITS VIEWS ON CANAL ISSUE BEFORE US DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES. IN GENERAL, HE REGARDS MASS MEDIA, PARTICULARLY IN US (WITH A FEW NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS), AS PANAMA'S DE FACTO ALLIES IN TELLING ITS STORY TO THE WORLD IN A WAY THAT PANAMA ALONE COULD NEVER MANAGE. THIS, AS WELL AS US SCHOOLING AND GENERAL ORIENTATION, LEADS HIM NATURALLY TO INCLINE TOWARD A POSITION SIMILAR TO OURS. HE HAS BEEN EXTREMELY COOPERATIVE WITH EMBASSY AND USIS IN PANAMA, AND IS CONSISTENTLY EAGER FOR OUR VIEWS ON EFFECTIVENESS (OR LACK THEREOF) OF VARIOUS PANAMANIAN POSITIONS IN TERMS OF ADVANCING ITS CAUSE VIS-A-VIS US MEDIA; WE HAVE STRESSED ESPECIALLY TO HIM DEGREE TO WHICH USG CONCERNS IN THIS AREA RELECT THOSE OF US MEDIA. EMBASSY SUGGESTS THAT FISHER AND BELL MAKE IT A POINT TO MEET WITH VELARDE AND, IF HIS INTERVENTIONS PROVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SATISFACTORY AT CONFERENCE, TO ASSESS FOR HIM DEGREE TO WHICH THEY COINCIDE WITH VIEWS WHICH WILL BE WELL RECEIVED BY MEDIA WITHIN US. WE DO NOT EXPECT THAT PANAMA WOULD BUCK A CONSENSUS ARRIVED AT BY OTHERS AT CONFERENCE. BUT NEITHER DO WE EXPECT PANAMA TO ASSUME ANY LEADING ROLE IN EFFORTS TO FURTHER LEGITIMIZE GOVERNMENTAL INTERVENTION IN FTREE FLOW OF INFORMATION. END COMMENT.

JORDEN

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